# Meet Me at the Library

## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacting Elected Officials</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AzLA Regional Representatives</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Email or Letter Invitation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecting With Legislators: 3 Talking Points Worksheet</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAQ’s</td>
<td>9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elected Official Packet</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packet Image</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
AzLA Legislative Toolkit: Meet Me at the Library

Introduction

Building relationships with legislators and local elected officials over time reaps support for and raises awareness of Arizona libraries. Inviting local decision makers to our libraries for informal conversations is an effective and fun way to share the important role libraries play for Arizona community members.

The **AzLA Legislative Toolkit: Meet Me at the Library** is designed to offer Arizona librarians a variety of options on how to engage with elected officials IN your libraries. The AzLA Legislative Committee encourages libraries across the state to:

- Host legislative events or meetings in their libraries or in their region
- Make connections by having conversations with decision makers
- Showcase the important ways libraries are meeting the needs of their constituents.

The toolkit includes ideas on how to plan these events or meetings, contact information for public officials, scripts to follow, and information on library issues. It can be as simple as inviting your legislator to a story time or to judge a student art contest at your library. Or, you could invite community members to have coffee and a conversation with their elected official. Tips on how to connect with your public officials throughout the year will help you meet AzLA’s goal of building ongoing relationships with legislators.

Legislators enjoy spending time in their communities. Remember, they live and work there! They love a photo-op with constituents and a chance to hear their concerns. Your invitation to Meet Me at the Library gives them an opportunity to learn how your library serves the community and for you to thank them for their support.
Contacting Elected Officials

STEP 1: Making the Invitation
Research: Prior to contact do a little research in order to become familiar with the elected official. In most cases information can be found on city, county, state, and federal government websites. Information on state and federal elected officials’ voting records and special interest groups can be found on www.vote-smart.org. The website also contains contact information for federal, state, county and city elected officials. Local media can serve as a helpful resource for position statements of city and county legislators. Identifying issues that are most important to an elected official and knowing what her/his interests are will help you to decide what sort of invitation you wish to make.

Invitation Options:
- Simple tour of the branch followed by a brief meeting
- Special event (library grand opening or anniversary, volunteer appreciation breakfast, National Library Week celebration, or Meet Your Legislator Coffee/Tea, for example)
- Library program (book club, story time, read to a dog, computer class, or GED class, for example)

Elected officials can be contacted via email, a written letter, or by phone. Correspondence via email or phone will elicit a faster response. If you choose to contact by phone, follow up with an email once a meeting is scheduled. When you make contact, briefly explain:

WHO: Your name
WHAT: An invitation
WHERE: Your library
WHEN: Be prepared with some possible dates and times, but be flexible according to the official’s schedule. If you are inviting the official to an event or program, you will have a specific date/time request, but be prepared in the case of a cancellation
WHY: To take a tour, to see how constituents use the library, and to participate in _____________________

Be concise and specific. You will likely make contact with an aide who is your direct connection to the elected official; therefore, it is important to establish a positive relationship with the aide.

Be persistent. You may need to contact the office more than once before you are able to schedule a date. The official may cancel and reschedule more than once. If the official is not available after several tries, schedule a visit with the official’s aide. Aides will communicate your views to your elected official, often at the most opportune time.

If the official plans to attend a special event or program, you may want to let local media know for the benefit of a photo-op. If you contact the media, make the elected official aware that you have done so.
STEP 2: Hosting the Meeting

• Welcome the official or aide, introduce yourself, and reiterate why s/he has been invited to the branch
• If a tour of the branch is planned, show the official your facility while highlighting the ways that customers (constituents) rely on it
• Give the elected official a pre-made packet of library information (see suggested item list and sample photos)
• Mention three talking points and/or three ways the library can serve the elected official. If you need help coming up with talking points, use the Connecting with Legislators: 3 Talking Points worksheet in the toolkit. Here are some examples:
  1. Our library has a new Back to Work program to help displaced workers find new careers.
  2. ________ people visit the branch each day and check out ________ items
  3. ___ people are in the process of earning their GED
• Mention three ways that the library can serve the elected official:
  1. Meeting rooms are available for town hall meetings
  2. Staff is available to assist with research and resources
  3. Bulletin boards are available for displays or for posting information
• If possible, during the visit, make a personal connection based on something you have in common
• If the elected official has been invited to participate in a specific library program, segue into that task. If not, welcome her/him to stay and spend some time and/or get a library card and thank her/him for taking the time out of her/his busy schedule to visit

STEP 3: Follow-up & Continuing the Relationship

Following the visit, send a note of appreciation to the elected official and to the aide. Forms of address for federal, state, county, and city elected officials is “The Honorable (name)”

The library visit is just the beginning of a relationship. Developing that relationship will be an ongoing process. Consider ways to stay current in the mind of an elected official.

• If you know that you will be near the official’s office, call ahead and try to make an appointment to visit her/his office
• If you were able to establish a personal connection during the library visit, build on that common ground in some way
• Send occasional information about library events and invite them to come
• Send a holiday card
• Submit news articles to Ward newsletter, legislative news media, or blog

STEP 4: Evaluation

The assignment begins in January 2011, and the goal is to have elected officials visit libraries by National Library Week, April 10-16, 2011.

Once you have followed through with contacting your official, scheduling a visit, and hosting the official at your location, send a brief description of the visit at your library along with some photos to your AzLA regional representative. Don’t get discouraged if you are not successful in scheduling a visit. We still want to hear back with the number of contacts you made.
AzLA Regional Representatives

Northern Regional Representative (V)
Heidi Holland
Flagstaff Public Library Director
County Librarian
Coconino County Library District
300 W. Aspen Ave.
Flagstaff, AZ 86001
Phone: 928-779-7673
hholland@flagstaffAZ.gov

Central Regional Representative (V)
Jacque Griffin
County Librarian
Gila County Library District
1400 E. Ash Street
Globe, AZ 85501
Phone: 928-200-0012
Fax: 928-425-3462
jgriffin@co.gila.az.us

Southern Regional Representative (V)
Angie Creel-Erb
Director
Arizona Western College
angie.creel-erb@azwestern.edu
Sample Email or Letter Invitation

Dear Representative [Doe]:

On behalf of the [name] Library, I am writing to invite you to attend our [Library Open House] on [date] at [time] at [location].

The Open House includes live music, refreshments, and a brief ceremony where we'll be giving certificates of achievement to [our teen volunteers, top summer reading achievers]. We'd love for you to stay for a tour of the library and a conversation about how we serve our community.

In addition to seeing the impact of the meaningful programs and services that our library is able to implement thanks to your funding support, it's also an opportunity for you to visit with [teens, librarians, parents, future voters].

I will follow up with a call to your office next week to learn of your availability. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you for your consideration of this invitation.

Sincerely,

(name)
(title)

(Library Address)

(phone number)
Connecting With Legislators: 3 Talking Points Worksheet

Congratulations! You now have a visit scheduled with a legislator. Whether they are coming to visit you, or you are going to meet with them, you will need something to talk about. The time you have with them is likely to be short so you will want to come up with a few key talking points before the visit. Keep your points concise and limit them to three. It is also a good idea to prepare 3 talking points related to the interests of your visiting legislator.

Brainstorm ideas – thinking in 3’s
You may already know what you want to talk about, but in case you are drawing a blank, here are some ideas to help you get started. List three of your most important library services. List three new programs you are excited about. List three programs that have contributed to a change in a customer’s life. List three programs or services most people don’t realize the library provides. List three of your favorite library stories. List three interesting, recent statistics.

Now pick three points from your list to share with your visiting legislator.
Remember, enthusiasm is catching so be sure to share it!

1.
2.
3.

You will also want to mention ways that the library can serve the elected official. Here are a few ideas: meeting rooms are available for town hall meetings, staff is available to assist with research and resources, bulletin boards are available for displays or for posting information. Your library may have some additional, unique ways to help elected officials, list them here:

1.
2.
3.

Finally, you may also want to highlight programs or services that could be of interest to the specific elected official with whom you will be meeting. Is the official a supporter of early childhood education or renewable energy sources? You should know a little bit about specific interests from your research. If not, now is a good time to check her/his voting record and website to see what she/he supports. List three programs or services that support the interests you find.

1.
2.
3.
FAQs

**Question:** Why do we want elected officials to come to our libraries?

**Answer:** They are decision makers. Their decisions as legislators directly affect the funding libraries receive, and in turn, the services libraries offer to customers (their constituents) every day.

**Question:** Why would an elected official come to my library?

**Answer:** Because your library is within their jurisdiction and is a good gathering place to meet and speak with constituents. Your legislator may be a library user and be interested in taking part in an event, or library program. S/he might also appreciate a good photo opportunity. Additionally, the elected official could learn more ways that the library can be used in the future, for meetings or town halls, for example.

Do some quick research to understand who your official is, and invite her/him to do something specific that supports her/his stance rather than opposes it.

**Question:** How many times will I have to attempt making contact? Don’t they have a huge staff that can respond to my request?

**Answer:** You may get lucky and reach them on your first call, but you may not. Be persistent, but not forceful. Be willing to utilize more than one method of contact. If you make contact and are told that you will be contacted soon, ask for a specific date. Then, if you are not contacted by that date, do make contact again.

Despite popular belief, elected officials do not have a large staff. It is not uncommon for them to have one aide, and it will serve you well to be in good favor with an official’s aide. Sometimes elected officials answer their own phones!

**Question:** When is the best time to schedule the visit?

**Answer:** Be aware of when the elected officials are in and out of session. The aide is a great resource of information and s/he will know the best availability. Be ready to accommodate the official’s schedule, and have a plan in place if the visit is canceled and rescheduled on a moment’s notice.

**Question:** What do we say to elected officials when they visit?

**Answer:** Prepare three clear and concise points that communicate the most important services the library offers from the customer’s point of view. You want the official to know how her/his constituents use libraries. You want her/him to know what customers experience at libraries and how libraries are important to them. All constituents are potential voters. Therefore, if we are relevant to constituents, elected officials will share that view of libraries. If you need help figuring out your three key points, try using the worksheet designed to help you devise talking points.
Question: How do I host someone whose political stance is offensive to me?
Answer: You host the official in your capacity as a library representative and maintain a professional stance without addressing views that you do not agree with personally.

Question: What if the official will not come to my library?
Answer: If the official will not be able to visit your library, do not give up. Maintain contact by occasionally sending information about library events. Send a holiday card or email a photo of a recent event that occurred at your library. If you know you will be near her/his office, call to schedule an appointment so that you can introduce yourself. Maintain as much of a relationship as you are able. Even if you do not meet face to face, it is possible to stay relevant in the mind of your legislator.

Question: Where can I find more information about how libraries can create relationships with legislators?
Answer: Legislative Advocacy Guide from YALSA
http://yalsa.ala.org/blog/2010/05/21/district-days-101-writing-to-your-legislator/
Posting on YALSA blog by Beth Gallaway about inviting your legislator to an event:
http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/profdev/LegAdvocacyGuide.pdf
Elected Official Packet

This list contains suggested items meant to give examples of what might be included. The goal is to assemble a packet that best highlights your library branch and library system.

☐ Pocket folder

☐ Map of Library Locations

☐ Library Magazine of Events (or any publicity you have that advertises ongoing programs such as story times, computer classes, book clubs, Homework Help, and GED)

☐ Locations and Hours

☐ Library Bookmark (including website address)

☐ Library pamphlets listing borrowing information, services provided, and electronic resources. It is given to customers when they sign up for a library card.

☐ Library Annual Report and/or your Meet Me at the Library Talking Points.

☐ Flyers advertising any upcoming special events such as a puppet show, author visit, family game night, etc.

☐ Your Business Card
Packet Images